



GOVERNOR'S OFFICE

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WILSON, FEDERAL OFFICIALS ANNOUNCE MAJOR STEP TOWARD ENDING ONE OF CALIFORNIA'S BIGGEST WATER WARS

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Sacramento -- After years of negotiations, Governor Pete Wilson and federal water officials today announced an unprecedented agreement that is a giant step towards ending one of California's biggest water wars.

The agreement announced today between the federal and state governments, environmentalists, urban and agricultural interests will provide certainty in water supplies for cities and farmers and environmental protection for the San Francisco Bay and Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta.

"Today, California is taking a major step in reclaiming from the federal government control of our water resources," Wilson said. "The agreement reached is designed to restore and protect the aquatic environmental resources and at the same time, minimize the effects on agriculture and urban uses of fresh water flowing into California's largest estuary."

Joining Wilson in announcing the compromise agreement today were several high ranking Clinton Administration officials including Interior Secretary Bruce Babbitt and U.S. EPA Administrator Carol Browner.

The major elements of the water agreement are:

- *** The Return to the State of primacy in California water policy. Early in 1995, the U.S. EPA will withdraw federally-mandated Bay Delta water quality standards in favor of comparable interim standards by the State Water Resources Control Board. A larger state role is at the heart of the Governor's water policy.
- *** Certainty in water supply for three years. The agreement guarantees, but limits water exports from the delta for the environment. In a critically dry year, for example, approximately 1.1 million acre feet could be devoted to species and habitat needs in the delta. No additional water for environmental purposes will be required of parties to this agreement and if for some reason, it is needed, it will be paid for in full by the federal government.

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- *** State-Federal partnership on Endangered Species Act in Bay Delta. The agreement provides for an integrated ecosystem approach to management of the Bay-Delta. No additional Endangered Species Act listings will occur within the three-year term of the agreement absent unforeseen circumstances.
- *** Cooperative managements of the State Water Project and the Central Valley Project (CVP). Beginning in 1995, the State Water Project and the CVP will begin operations under the standards in this agreement. State and federal agencies will improve coordination of water operations to meet endangered species needs.

"The federal government has agreed to a partnership with the state in the management and protection of natural resources under the Endangered Species Act," Wilson said. "While this is an important step, it does not obviate the need to fundamentally reform the Endangered Species Act to provide for economic considerations in listings and species management plans."

Today's agreement is a product of Governor Wilson's Water Policy and his long standing position that sound water policy in California could not exist as long as the federal government failed to coordinate amongst the numerous federal agencies involved in the state's water issues. Late in 1993, the federal government formed a group known as "Club Fed", a group of officials from four federal agencies to coordinate the U.S. government's water policy in the delta.